

information, communications—that were wielded by both sides and eventually shaped the outcome of the 1988 plebiscite.

Perhaps Stern's most important achievement in this book is to have interpreted this whole period as history. With scholarly rigor and an impressive array of contemporary sources, he has stepped back from earlier accounts and produced an analytical narrative driven by actors and events that is notably fresh, even when most readers know how the story turns out. His consideration of Pinochet's social support and "battle to win Chilean hearts and minds"—a battle his regime "waged and won, and then waged and lost" (1)—modifies many existing interpretations (and offers new insight into continuities since 1988). Stern historicizes the human rights movement, asking why its exposés "seemed to fall on apathetic ears" for so long (138, cf. 196, 218), and shows why its moral appeals only gained traction later. He not only uses contemporary press sources to great effect but also provides a persuasive history of the media's changing role through the period, as alternative publications gradually reached a greater public. He goes a long way toward integrating the varied international influences—often considered partially and for limited periods—that shaped national developments throughout these years.

In all, this is an impressive synthesis based on prodigious research. Stern has provided an exemplary twenty-page essay on sources, and more than 90 pages of endnotes are studded with insightful brief commentaries (e.g. on death-and-disappearance and torture figures, 392-95). Some of the 'Afterwords' that follow each chapter succeed better than others, and Stern's stylistic insistence on a memory vocabulary ("memory knots," "memory voices," "memory clock," etc.) can sometimes be distracting, but these are cavils. His focus on social memory, which allows him to consider the moral and subjective elements of human experience, together with his historian's sensitivity to indeterminacy and human agency make this a compelling interpretation of how Chileans lived the Pinochet years.

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Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India, 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and a Possible History* (Kolkata: Seribann, 2006).

This is a work of remarkable clarity that manages to steer between the rock of anti-communism and the hard place of Stalinism while contributing a fresh approach to a complex problem and understanding that the history of the Communist International (Comintern) in India is a many-sided difficulty. Sobhanlal Datta Gupta is not someone who attempts to hide his independent Marxist approach from the reader. The author notes "this book is an attempt to explore the gray

areas, the zones of silence, by discarding official Marxism as well as unabashed anti-communism” (xxi). Moreover, the writer openly proclaims he:

will not be dismayed if the postmodern radicals who consider Marxism as ‘passe’ and ideologies redundant find the book useless and irrelevant. Such responses would simply remind me of Schopenhauer, who once said, ‘Blessed is the man who does not know how to think.’ . . .neither dogmatism nor scepticism will save the Left from the quagmire in which it is enmeshed today, and for its survival it will have to come to terms with history (xxi).

With this type of introduction, no one may claim that the author was shy about sharing this approach or basic assumptions. In many ways, this is not a work for the intellectually faint-hearted in as much as it is theoretically rigorous and awash with detail. Despite that warning, it is a fascinating read for those interested in Indian Communism. This book explores the ‘voices of difference’ on India that were ignored by the Comintern and then by traditional Indian Communist history. Gupta examines what did happen and what could have happened. He gives sufficient discussion to the important role of M.N. Roy in early Indian communism without reducing this period to a discussion of one individual. As concerns Roy, the author notes the centrality of Roy’s hostility to Gandhi in the 1920s, a tradition followed by R. Palme Dutt (42).

What follows the introduction is far from a polemical or purely theoretical work. *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India* begins with an insightful and complete examination of the new historiography of the Comintern. Among the various layers of analysis contained in this refreshingly unique section are: a rethinking of the periodization of the history of the Comintern; a comparing the monolithic character of the Comintern vs. the autonomy of the national sections of the Communist Parties (CPs); following the opening of Soviet archives, an assessment of the reliability of the archival information, mechanisms of control and surveillance and Russification employed by the Comintern. One very practical question this book addresses early on is how Moscow managed to control National CPs.

In South Asia, the Communist Party of India (CPI) found itself increasingly under the supervision of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Then there was the question of financial aid. The 100,000 Russian gold roubles given to the small CPI in August 1926 did nothing to reduce Soviet influence. If the Russians controlled the purse strings, the British supplied the ideology. There was also the mechanism of persuasion or ‘propaganda’ when the Comintern would place their materials in the press of the party being ‘educated’ as well as ‘Open Letters’ from the Moscow center to the national parties. Furthermore, the Comintern cultivated factions within each national party that were loyal to the Comintern. In some situations, there might have even been coercion and intima-

tion. Behind it all was the domination of the Comintern by the Russians from the very start, despite protests by Lenin himself (57-58).

Worse was to befall the fledgling movement as the fall of Bukharin meant “the possibility of providing any alternative to Stalin’s understanding was permanently closed” (123). Thereafter, the CPI was given a series of bizarre tasks during the so-called Third Period, such as “fighting for a Soviet republic” while attacking British Imperialism and native reformists, “especially the ‘Left’ wing!” (142). With the rise of Dimitrov to leadership in the Comintern, Gupta points to the completion of the Comintern’s transformation into a tool of Soviet foreign policy. Yet in all, Dimitrov was different from Stalin. He represented difference although not dissidence in the Communist International. Meanwhile, back in London, the CPGB did “well as nothing” on the colonial question during the period of 1935-1943. Still, the British party “emerged as the spokesman of the Comintern in relation to the CPI in the most crucial phase in the history of communism in India, namely, 1935-1943, that is, the period of United Front and War.” (158).

To be sure, there were to be differences between the British conductors of Comintern policy and the Indian comrades. Specifically, there were disagreements about work in the army and the slogan of ‘Pakistan’ (221-223). Still, the Comintern maintained control of Indian Communism, often through the persons of the British CP, who had easier access to India than non-English Communists. By the dissolution of the Communist International in 1943, the Communist Party of India “had no role to play, the party was left with no choice, oriented as it had become in a spirit of uncritical acceptance of the authority of Moscow” (226).

There were a number of outstanding Indian Marxists living in the Soviet Union who could have played a major part in the growth of a radical movement in their homeland. These individuals were caught up in Stalin’s purges and their murders further cemented the CPGB’s monopoly on the ‘Indian Question’. This development had a profound impact on the shaping of the Indian Communist movement. Thus, the problems of Russian Marxism had a global effect on the world’s Communist parties through the instrument of the quick Russified Comintern. Stalinism was, in the author’s opinion, evitable but rather made possibly by the failure of the other possible alternatives.

Still, this book is far from a catalog of left tragedy. Gupta ends with a refreshing and provocative look at the possibilities of Indian Communism. Noting how Rosa Luxemburg’s famous belief in the “freedom to think differently” had been “foreclosed permanently” by the Stalin dominated Comintern, the author says: “Time has come for all concerned people to acknowledge this bitter truth and appreciate the necessity of rewriting the true history of Indian communism... The book closes, cherishing this hope in mind” (306).

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